

Miss Crook

OVER THE TAKLA-MAKAN
DESERT.



A Journey in Chinese Turkestan.

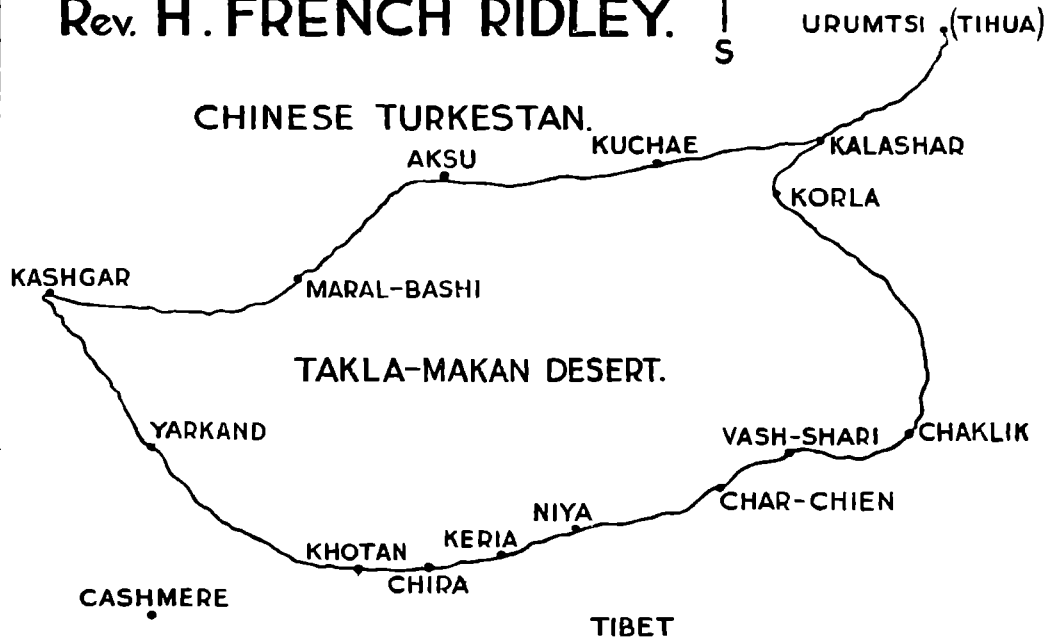


By the Rev. H. French Ridley (China Inland Mission).



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ROUTE of JOURNEY
UNDERTAKEN BY
Rev. H. FRENCH RIDLEY.



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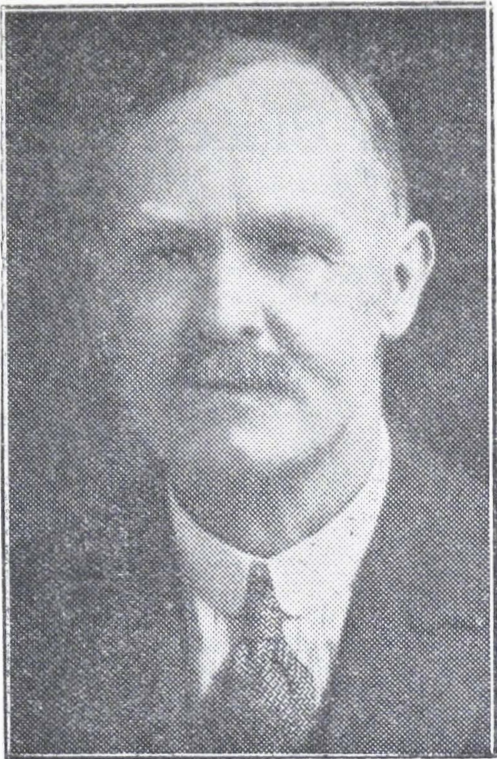


A Journey in Chinese Turkestan.



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I STAYED at Dokshun one day, and Kalashar one day. The first day out at evening a storm of wind and snow blew up, so we did not travel the next day. No one stirred out of the inn. It was a terrible gale blowing over the desert. A donkey man coming in the opposite direction was caught in the storm with his fourteen donkey loads of sultanas. The poor donkeys could not get forward for the gale, so he threw off their loads and fled to our inn to save his own life. His face and hands were badly swollen; next morning it was calm, and he found seven of his donkeys at Aqazaq tent. As we came along we saw the loads almost buried in snow and two donkeys lying dead. From that day we have had delightful weather, and south of the Tienshan it has been delightful travelling.

Alone in the Desert all night.

On the 8th day at evening the donkey man said it was four or five li to the inn, but another man said was 20 li. I believed the donkey man, so sent my man ahead with my horse and also the luggage to have all ready when I arrived, and tea ready also, and I stayed behind to have a read and meditate, going on slowly. After going a good way, quite five li, I could see nothing of the inn, so concluded the donkey man had deceived me, so on I went, meeting four Chanteo on the way; felt sure I was in the right way but could see no inn. On and on I went until it became dark and I was finally tumbling about among the Russian thistle and thorn. I realized I had missed my way and was lost in the desert, so for twelve solid hours I moved about in a small circle to keep myself from going to sleep.

I had had nothing to eat since the morning, and had walked about fifty to sixty li, so was glad when daylight broke. Then I discovered what I thought was road the night before was hard white soil

When the haze cleared away, I took my bearings by the sun, so set off in a S.E. direction and came across a single cart track which led to somewhere. I followed it for some time, when I saw in the far distance dust rising. I watched, and by and by saw some people and some animals. I hastened on to them, and found they were people who had been travelling along with us. They knew I had not turned up, so the man got off his donkey and offered me a ride, and I begged him to give me a little bread. After riding a short way I met my servant who had gone to the end of the day's stage to make enquiries and was returning and he was glad to see me. The other party went on, and he had brought my fur cloak and laying it on the bag, told me to go to sleep.

He said the whole party of ten (seven men, two women, and a little girl of seven, all Chanteo) had all been out searching for me and were very anxious and distressed, and the innkeeper had comforted them by telling them that some years ago an official's son after arriving at the inn went to the top of one of the peaks by himself, the others going part of the way, and they never saw him again. A search was carried on seventy days without a clue being found, and it was thought he had been eaten by a tiger. The party were probably more anxious for themselves than for me, for if I had not turned up suspicion might have fallen upon them.

After resting awhile, our party came along and when they saw me safe and sound they were exceeding glad. I had no anxious fears myself, save that a storm might rise during the night, if I had fallen asleep. All was excitement for the time, which was diverted by a drove of 300 sheep coming along, and my man suggested to me that it would show my appreciation of their searching for me, and little sleep and much anxiety, if I bought a sheep and gave them a feast. I went to sleep when they were preparing it, and when ready, they woke me, and there was great rejoicing at the sheep that was lost being found again and we

began to be merry. When they had finished they decided to go on another twenty miles and rest the next day at Issaktal, "the tail of a donkey," so we went on, arriving at 2.30 p.m. The adventure was the talk for days.

Desire of many years realised.

Now, I expect you will get a surprise when I tell you where I am going now. Well, the day after tomorrow, I am leaving here to cross the Talku-Makan to Chaglik, Churchana, Karia, Yarkand, Kashgar, and back via Asku Kuchal, Korla to Tihua. This is no new plan of mine, but I had not intended going till 1931. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Oft when in Sining I used to look away west from the housetop and wonder if I would ever see these parts for direct west from Sining to Kashgar there was no messenger of the Gospel. Tihua is N.W.

When I came to Tihua I thought it would be my last long journey, but the Lord has willed it otherwise; and as the years have gone by, again the spiritual need of these people, who have never had a chance of hearing the Gospel, has pressed itself upon me, so that a year ago I wrote to some special friends at home, and to my own family, that I felt the Lord was leading me on this journey, and that probably I would take it on my way home, 1931. But donkeys from Kalashar were ready to be hired, a horse came to hand unexpectedly, and a Chanteo servant, with a man to guarantee the servant, was engaged. Going among the Chanteo it was meet to have a Chanteo. When I got to Kalashar I was being urged forward, and a country cart was at hand to carry my luggage. The officials did not trouble me with questions when they found I was from Fuhingtang (Gospel or Christian Hall or Mission) and selling books; so I came on here. The first night they came to the inn to see me and get my card, and I have seen none since, so the way kept opening; then the innkeeper found me a reliable man with donkeys, who is willing to take me as far as Khotan so the way is open, and I thank the Lord for giving me this high honour of putting the Gospel and "Pilgrim's Progress" into the hands of the people.

Market Day in Korla.

My stunt off into the wilds took place at Korla, 12 days S.W. of Tihua. The city of Korla, situated on the banks of the Kouche river, was very busy when we arrived. It was bazaar, or weekly fair day, and also Friday, their day of worship. The narrow street was packed with people, buying and selling. Probably three-quarters of the business of the week is done on this day. Except Korla, Karashar, and a few more places in the East, no other day throughout the southern part of the Province, is bazaar day held on a Friday. It looks as if the Mullahs had an eye to business like the Pharisees and Sadducees, of old, when they permitted the Temple courtyard to be used to make money. Everything that was to be bought was on show that day. The people hustled each other on the street. Men, women, boys, girls, all in one dense crowd, the younger women veiled. Anyone trying to get through with an animal had to cry "Posh, Posh," all the way. A prominent figure was a beggar on horseback, begging, minus both his feet. Some friend or relative probably lent him the horse. Soon after my arrival, British subjects from Hindustan, (Musselmen) came to see me, bringing apples, grapes, eggs etc. One of them is an innkeeper, the rest merchants. The oasis of Korla is 3 miles east to west, and 20 miles from north to south, and supports 3,400 families, a pretty little place and has an abundance of fruit trees. The people were courteous, and I was able to dispose of some books. I remained 10 days and gathered much information about the southern route. Some years ago Mr Hunter had thought about trying this route, but heard that there was a great deal of marshy land and much water, which was very difficult to find a way through.

Assembly of Caravan.

Ere the dawn of Christianity the soldiers of Rome built good roads in every direction, making it safe for the people to go to and fro; so when Christ told his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel,

they had the benefits of these good roads to help them forward; so now in my case again it was the soldiers who had gone before and made a cart road from Korla to Chaklik, built up a bank through the marshes, cut canals so that sweet water could be obtained at the end of each day's journey, which made it easier for me, out on the same journey as the early Christians 1900 years ago. Fearing that the Dungans, in case of their defeat at Kansuh, might make their way into this province, as they did in 1896, soldiers were sent to Tikenlik and Chaklik to check them. As the produce of these places was not sufficient to support so many soldiers, flour had to be transported thither in large quantities. There being so much marshy land it was necessary to build a road to facilitate the transport. 36,000 lbs. of flour had and still has to be transported every month by means of donkeys, oxen, and carts. Now that there was a cart road everything favoured my making the journey through. I had not intended taking the journey until the Autumn of 1931. My caravan consisted of 6 donkeys, my own horse, a donkey driver, and a Chanteo servant, engaged in Urumtsi. Bread was made for the whole journey to Chaklik; to keep it from getting too hard, 31 lbs. of mutton fat was added to each 10 lbs. of flour. We also bought 30 lbs. of mutton.

All preparations ready, early in the morning of the 16th November, we started out with the moon smiling down upon us. We had a little sleep and were roused up early by the arrival of the donkey driver along with a few of his friends to see us off. I also heard a woman's voice, so I thought it best to get up quick, if I did not want her to see me dress. She was the donkey man's wife and was going with us two days journey to see some cattle herded out. There was a lot of laughing and joking as we went along, giving us a good start. As soon as the relatives had left we quickened our pace, for was there not a long day's journey before us? In a little over an hour we left the charming little oasis and launched into the desert of Strauel "sai," called by the Chanteo, and Piedmont gravel in books. 30 li march brought us to a wee oasis where there were a few farmsteads. 10 li more we

got to Shin-ar-ra where there was a large tree which shaded us while we had our lunch. Half the stage was over. The next 60 li there was grass land more or less all the way to Kar-kum "black sand." It was dark when we arrived, we pitched our camp outside of a farmhouse, had supper of bread and mutton broth, and retired to sleep under the starry heavens.

The Simple Life.

The next day after journeying 25 li, we came in touch with the Konche river again, also a road branching off to Konche, the next 40 li was through jungle, the shapes of many of the trees being most fantastic, twisted and curled in an indescribable manner. Wild pigs haunt the jungles. 40 li brought us to Aghiz, where we crossed the river. There is only one hut occupied by a grandmother, son and grandson (Chanteos). Here was the simple life exemplified. Three-quarters of the room taken up with a Kang 1 foot from the ground, large enough for 15 or 16 to sleep on, all covered with felts. A large mud stove for cooking purposes, which also heats the Kang; above the stove a shelf on which were a few basins and jars. A little fireplace on the kang at one end, and at the other a few boxes, bedding, and a string of onions hanging on the wall. These were their all and they were quite content. The hut, made of mud bricks, square in shape, without windows, roof covered with straw, nestled on the bank of the broad Konche river with the jungle behind. Here we rested for the night in this quiet peaceful spot. The son could read and was pleased to accept a Gospel and a "Pilgrim's Progress" in Turki.

Next morning we crossed the river in a ferry, which is made of five canoes lashed together, boards laid on top and a paddle at each end. We landed in the jungle at the other side. Here and there were little farmsteads, hidden away among the trees on the bank of the river. 20 li further brought us to the little village of Choang-Kiel, "big lake," of 20 houses. Each home has its own canoe for fishing or fetching fuel from some of the islands or the jungle beyond. The water was low so

that there were many little islands; when the water is high it must be a very big lake. Here we rested a day, as our donkey man and his wife went over the water in a boat to the place where the herdsmen were, but they returned without seeing their cattle. The children were very shy at first, but mustered courage when I gave them sweets and a little picture card. One young maiden was giving the children joy rides in her canoe, taking 4 or 5 at a time. I bought a fish caught in the lake. It was about 2 ft. in length, much like a mackerel. I did not care much for its flavour. A little village like this is a miniature of the religious life of all villages, towns, and cities in Chinese Turkestan, five times a day did the mullah ascend the roof and call the people to prayers. It is not expected that all attend, but on Friday, their worship day, all are expected to be present. Just at break of day the voice of the mullah sounds out on the air. A mussalman merchant, from Hindustan, trading in these parts, joined himself to our caravan on the first day, apparently intending to travel at my expense, but on the third day I politely told him that we had only brought sufficient food for ourselves to Chaklik, so we could not give him any more. The next morning very early he took his departure. He was very earnest in this devotion, and I expect he thought the Sabib was a kind man and could be imposed upon.

Following the River's Course.

Two days later we entered the marshy region, and appreciated the benefits of the new road built up through the marsh; beyond the embankment there were soldiers trying to pull a cart out of the mud. They were escorting an official's wife to Korla. 6 days south of Choang-kul we came to the little town of Tikenlik, with a population formerly of 500, now reduced to half the number owing to the unproductiveness of the land, the ground being too saline. On our way to Tikenlik we saw a farmstead here and there in the Tiz-kul and Chara districts. 40 li south of Tikenlik we came to Dural, where there is a town wall, now crumbling, and many empty houses. I heard that an official had spent 100,000 ounces of silver

in building the town and houses for Dungsans, who fled from Sining in 1896 after the Moslem rebellion. A large number were settled in Dural, but gradually they left owing to the unproductiveness of the ground and went north to Karashar. 3 days south of Tikenlik we came to the ferry at Arghan. The animals forded the river further down. This was the third time we had come across the Yarkand river. 2 days from Choangkul we saw it in the distance, away to the west of us. Our donkey man told us that there used to be two water wheels on the river. The day before we reached the ferry, the road ran parallel with it for 30 li, then it flowed westward again, and at the ferry we crossed it. The men at the ferry said that there had been a great decrease in the flow during the last few years. Kara-bais, where we stayed the evening before we reached the ferry, has a population of 70 families. A very heavy hail was on the ground this morning. There are no more villages after passing Kara-bais until we reach Chaklik. At Arghan there are five families only, Tokmat one family, Kurghan one, Lob one, Jungle, prairie, grass land and desert, make up the road from Korla to Chaklik. Saw no animals except wild pigs. Insect life were enjoying their winter sleep. Saw two crows on the way to Lob, one wondered what brought them there, had they been banished for some offence against the law of crows. We camped by the side of rivers or lakes all the way to Chaklik, except at Choangkul and Tikenlik. It was not at all cold until we reached Kurghan, when a "buran," the terror of all travellers in Chinese Turkestan, roared across the desert. It was our rest day, nevertheless we could not have travelled that day. We were camped in the jungle in a hollow and so escaped its fury.

The Terror of all Travellers.

Many are the tales of men, horses, and even carts being blown into the desert; snow fell, an almost unknown thing in that region lower than sea level, and from there right round Khotan, to Yarkand and Kashgar, the ground was covered with snow. Then began the coldest winter ever known by the oldest inhabitants south of the Takla-Makan

desert. A huge log fire helped to keep us warm. Several ox carts carrying flour were held up at the same spot, so the carters spent a lot of time with us. Shepherds from Chaklik herd hundreds of sheep and cattle from Arghan and Kurghan. They were delighted to have the books which I gave them. The "Pilgrim's Progress" especially would help them to while away many a lonely hour. This tour was taken with the one special purpose of putting the Scriptures into the hands of the people in this desert region, which had not been visited before by the messengers of the gospel. One thing I lacked was a companion to talk to.

My Chanteo servant and interpreter turned out to be anything but a nice fellow. The evening after we left Kurghan we crossed the Char-chien River bridges, and camped on the banks for the night. We brought fuel with us as there was only grass where we camped. The Langar, the home of the courier was far to the east. His was the only house in the desert of Lob. The next day, 120 li was a long weary trek over the barren desert. We picked up some large pieces of ice on the way, and arrived in Chaklik at dusk. When we still had some 20 li to go, it was so cold that I put on my heavy fur gown, the first time I had worn it and never had need to wear it again, until the third and fourth days before I arrived in Urumtsi, except at the evening feasts at the Yamens.

Meets a Friend.

The population of Chaklik is 140 families, but the district supports about 900 families. I knew the magistrate; we had met in Urumtsi, and his boy often came to the guest room. He was very kind to me; he gave me a present of 40 lbs. of grain for my horse, and 30 lbs. of flour for myself. Chaklik is a pretty little place and is well supplied with water from the Chaklik river which was frozen all over. Here there is an old ruin occupying a good deal of space. Just now there are stationed 700 Chaneo, Mongolian, and Chinese soldiers, to guard the frontier against the Dungans. Every day, carts, oxen, and donkeys were

arriving from Korla and Char-chien bringing flour for the troops. The courtyard where I was staying was covered in, as it is very hot in the summer, and kangas are built outside the rooms as well as inside. Here I bought the donkeys I had hired in Korla. It was a mistake; far better to get fresh donkeys, as these were tired with the long journey; however the loads were lighter, as it was not necessary to carry so much grain for the animals. We had fresh bread made at Chaklik, and we took on more mutton with us. As long as we could get mutton there was no need for us to use the foreign stores I had with me.

Official Rest House.

We left Chaklik on the 9th December, 18 li from the street we were in the barren desert again, nothing but "sai," all the way to the end of the first stage at Gilliq. Nothing could be seen of the Langar till we were at it, for there are only two little rooms in the hut which is situated under a bank beside the Gilliq river. Both rooms were occupied when we arrived, but the Chanteo merchants occupying one room kindly invited me to share it with them. They had brought fuel with them, and also grass for their horses, so I shared the warm fire with them and was able to have a warm supper. The next day we passed a small oasis on our right about halfway, also a well near the roadside where caravans rest, and in the evening we reached the little town of Vashshari where the Official Rest House was placed at our disposal. There are 120 families. Trees abundant, but the road heavy with sand. The young women of the household made excuses to pass my door to have a peep at me, as the sight of a white man is rare in these parts. The white man has to walk warily in Chanteo lest he offend them unconsciously. Like the Durgans they never use a wash basin to wash in; they always have the water poured upon their hands, and in many homes they have a special place to wash in. In the room where my servant and I stayed was one of these places. It

was a little pit behind the door and covered over with boards. They wash themselves over these boards and the dirty water flows down into the pit. My wash basin had been used and needed a little cleansing, so I put a couple of cups of hot water into it, then threw it down on to the floor, near the door where everyone treads when they come in or out. My servant became very angry because the water fell near the pit, and I asked him the reason, and he replied that the water had gone into the pit where they wash their hands. I said, "Your outward ceremonies are very important, but the heart being clean is not so important." He thought I was hitting him personally because he had been cheating me, so he said, "Do you mean me." I replied, "I did not speak of persons but of ceremonies." The cap fit and he put it on. We rested a day at Vash-shari.

Musical Evening.

The next stage the road was heavier with sand as we were approaching the sand dunes; prairie grass here and there, also a well by the way. The Langar was at Chingelik, one hut only. The keeper of these Langars are supported by the Government. Here there was no grass near enough to rear a few sheep, so the Langar depended entirely upon what he got from the Government, supplemented by what he got from the few travellers who passed that way. There were 5 in the family, a father and mother, son and son's wife, and a daughter of 12. There were only two rooms. Soon a good log fire warmed up the room and a cup of tea made ready. Later two more travellers turned up, and still later a shepherd. He had lost 3 goats, and found them at Vash-shari, two days away. We all joined together at supper, the usual mutton broth, that one never gets tired of. After supper the son brought his guitar and began to sing and play. Later other members of the party played and sang, all beginning on a minor key, and sounded a little mournful. One of the songs was "Out on the road waiting for my friend." Another, "Benefits of travelling by night in the desert." I told the wonderful story of God's love

and gave them each a Gospel. The women folk were in the other room, and the younger ones were peeping through the holes in the partition, but drew their eyes away as soon as anyone looked that way. Stories then followed, and my servant informed them that my teeth were false, when a remark was made about them, so there was no help but to pull them out and show them. They were keenly interested. It was a homely evening and a good preparation for the hard day on the morrow. We had reached the foot of the sand dunes. Apparently travellers had gone round the dunes according to the maps, but we were to cross them, which was the much nearer route.

Over the Sand Dunes.

We started early for the distance was uncertain. It is difficult to get the right distances from the people. Asking the distance from Chaklik to Char-chien, one man gave 450 li, another 550 li, and another 770 li, the correct distance being 720 li. The sand dunes are very high, rising up to over 200 feet. We would go up so far, then there was a sheer drop of 20 feet, then up again and another drop. The distance to the foot of the dunes on the other side was 100 li, but still further to the Langar, which we did not reach that night, for one of our party feeling tired, made the suggestion that we should camp near the fort where there was food for the animals, plenty of fuel, and a nice little stream of clear water; there was no dissentient voice, for animals and man were all fagged out. When we got to the place of encampment the shepherd missed his fur gown, which he had thrown on one of the horses. Poor fellow, I did feel sorry for him, for he had walked all the way, and he was far from being young. Off he went back and found it not far away. His tent had been removed so he decided to stay with us, but ere long we heard a voice calling; it was his companion calling for him; probably he had seen our camp fire, so off the old shepherd went.

After supper we were soon in the land of Nod. We were now in the valley of the

Char-chien river, and our camp was near its banks. The sun had already risen and was shining down upon us ere there was any stir in the camp. Next morning everyone was feeling the effects of the trip over the dunes. It was a lovely morning. Our path lay through the jungle for near by 20 li, when we caught sight of the Langar on the top of a bank which we should have reached last night. Plenty of good grazing ground nearly all the way to Choang-kul, called after the big lake, which we passed almost covered with reeds. Two families occupied the Langar, which was quite big, having 4 rooms. In our room was a mother, and her 3 children, who were naked, sitting round the log fire in the centre of the room. The woman had a sweet face, large wistful eyes and looked superior to the lowly conditions with which she was surrounded. Two of the children took after the mother, the same lovely eyes, and a refinement not often found among the children of the poorer classes. One of our fellow travellers was an addict to the smoking of hemp, which is very common among the Chanteos, and it is almost as bad as smoking opium.

A Cordial Welcome.

The next day we entered the Char-chien oasis, crossed the river on an ice bridge, and came across cultivation once more in the Tatum district, and arrived at the village to be told that there was no inn, but I overheard someone say "Kong-Kuan"—official quarters—so I said, "Yes Kong-kuang," and a door was thrown open, and we found ourselves in the nicest kong-kuan I have ever seen on the roads. The low kang was covered with Khotan carpets. The keeper's wife soon had a good fire going in the little fire place on the kang, and we were very cosy. This family consisted of a man, his wife, and his mother. Homely people they were. After supper they came and joined us round the fire. The village elder came in later with a few others to see who we were, and I presented him with a Gospel. All round Tatum there are many farms, and I should think sufficient water to

irrigate more ground if opened up. I noticed some of the houses much better looking than others, and I was informed they belonged to Chinese from Hupeh. Before the Republic dawned they told me there were 30 Chinese farmers, but at the dawn of the Republic when there were uprisings here and there in the Province, their men were involved, so seized by the Chinese Official and put to death. Some of the officials were killed in those troubles, including the Tao-Tai of Kashgar. Between Tatrarn and Char-chien there is good grazing ground; we passed herds of sheep, cattle, and horses.

Interview with Magistrate.

The road to Char-chien runs parallel with the river the greater part of the way. Here I saw bares for the first time. December 16th we reached Cha-chien about 4 p.m. (Char-chien is spelt Church-end on many maps.) As we entered the city the scholars were just leaving the school, there was a quarrel going on between a woman and some of the boys, and as usual a big crowd watching; our advent drew the attention of all; the quarrel ceased and the crowd followed us to the inn. The news of our arrival was soon known in the Yamen, and as they had no official news of my coming, the official was very anxious to know who I was,

where I had come from &c. &c, so sent his secretary to make enquiries. He came in in a blustering way and demanded to know where I had come from. (Since the revolution the prestige of the white man has suffered a great deal). I had met this kind of man before so took no notice of his rudeness and quietly invited him to sit down, but he would not. "Well" I said, "You see I have just arrived, not even had a wash yet, and am having a cup of tea, so just sit down. "The magistrate is anxious to know who you are as he had not heard of your coming," he replied, a little more civil in his speech. "Sit down a while, I am not going to run away, and am resting to-morrow," I said, and then he sat down. "Have you got a passport," he asked. "Yes, but I will give you my card and tell the dar-ren I will visit him

to-morrow and bring my passport, for I feel a little tired to-night." He would not go without the passport, so I sent my servant with him to bring it back again. The following day I visited the official, a genial old Chanteo man who can write and speak Chinese. He received me graciously, and later made his return call, and departing, said, "Now we have met and know each other, therefore friends, and if I come to Tihua I will come and see you." In our conversation he asked me about Christianity, thus giving me an favourable opportunity of stating our belief as simply as possible, stressing the fact that Christ died and rose again. "Did he really die and rise again," he asked. "Yes, that is the foundation on which we stand." He listened very attentively, so did the crowd standing round. "Cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall be found after many days."

Renewing Acquaintance.

About 10 years ago, many of the larger districts in this Province were sub-divided thus vastly increasing their number, thus giving openings for many of the waiting officials. Charchien is one of the subdivisions. Formerly it was in the Keria district, now has its own magistrate and Yamen. There are some 180 families in the town itself, probably 400 or 500 more families in the district. A new Yamen was built when the district was formed, also several shops. The merchants get their goods from Keria and Khotan, otherwise there is very little intercourse between the two places. Flour was being sent to Chaklik for the soldiers, apart from this there is very little traffic between the two places. Here we met two agents representing a Tihua Russian firm, buying furs; they also had been among the Mongols in the Altyn Mountains (mountains of gold): also I met two young men whom I knew in this secluded spot, one a young Chanteo who had visited our Guest Room the year before, and the other the Chinese secretary in the Yamen. A number of people visited me in the inn, and there was quite a demand for books. One of our fellow travellers from Chaklik, where he had been to see his daughter, brought his wife and little boy to

see me, bringing me a huge melon. The main purpose of their visit was to see my wonderful teeth. The man had seen them on the way. After sitting awhile the man mustered up courage to ask me to show them to his wife. She had a tooth missing in the same place as the one I lost on the way, and I drew her attention to it, and she smiled, but that did not satisfy her, she wanted to see teeth that could be taken out at will. When I took them out, you should have seen the little laddie's eyes. Didn't he stare, so did the woman. I then pretended to take out the little fellow's teeth, but he said, "My teeth won't come out." I gave him a few Russian peppermints, a piece of loaf sugar, and two picture cards; he was delighted. I gave the parents each a piece of loaf sugar, and the woman a little of Lipton's tea. I seldom give tea, it is so dear, as it comes from India. Loaf sugar comes from Russia, and can be bought anywhere, like cigarettes. The woman was a very nice, homely woman, and good looking for a Chanteo. There are some very pretty girls among the Chanteo, but they soon age. The magistrate sent two men to look after me, to get anything I wanted, but they kept the children out, for which I was sorry. I went on the street to buy candles, and soon there was a great crowd running after me. I thought nothing of it, as seldom a white man passes this way, and the people wanted to have a good look at me. One of the Yamen men had followed me, and seeing the crowd he got nervous, and wanted to hurry me back to the inn. He was afraid something might happen to me and he would be blamed. I laughed at him saying, "Let them have a good look at me," but he was persistent, so I returned.

A Longing of Many Years Fulfilled.

December 18th—7.30. This morning I bade farewell to Charchien. I had seen the place with my own eyes, which for 30 odd years I had wondered what sort of place it could be, as I pondered over the map from time to time. I changed my donkey man, and got a pleasant willing fellow who brought his nephew with him, a lad of twelve years. One of our fellow travellers from Chaklik continued with us, and also a merchant who had been waiting for companions, joined us. Our

caravan consisted of 5 men, a boy, 3 horses and 9 donkeys. We laid in provisions to last us 13 days. Being cold weather, meat and vegetables were easily carried. I packed in a tin box a few grapes. Carrying grain for the animals was our heaviest burden. Out of Charchien we were right into the desert once more with a very heavy sandy road to encounter with many sand dunes, and the whole 80 li, not a house to be seen; halfway we passed a well, which must be a joy to many a pedestrian in the hot weather. Caravans, as a rule, stop at these wells rather than at the Langars (rest houses). Ketmas is the name on the maps, and it possesses one miserable little hut very low, with peep holes all round, yet we were glad to have a roof over us, as snow was falling. During the evening a man arrived with two fox skins for sale; he had caught them in an heavy iron trap; the merchant bought them for £1 each. The man in charge of the hut is all alone. He was on his way to Charchien when he met us, and returned to look after us. Days pass without a traveller passing that way. The man might suddenly take ill, and no one to help him. These men in charge of the Langars are paid by the Governor to look after travellers, and they also add a little to their meagre wage from passing travellers. The next day the road was easier, the sand dunes smaller, wells at 45 and 60 li places. Aqbai, like Ketmas, possesses one small hut.

Musical Evening in the Desert.

On our arrival the donkey man drove the donkeys to a place where there was a little wild grass, and at dusk, instead of going to fetch them, he called them, and they all came running home, or rather to the hut. We had music and singing in the evenings; one of our fellow travellers is both a musician and a singer. He sings nearly all the time he is on horse back, save when he sings himself to sleep, then wakes to find his animal eating grass and far behind the caravan, or at other times, he is suddenly aroused by a fall to the ground, and has to bestir himself to catch his runaway animal. It was pleasant to hear the guitar being played, accompanied by a song, banishing the weariness of the desert journey from the mind. Shakespeare speaks of trying to see "good

in everything," "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." I wonder what he would have found in these barren deserts, no trees, no songsters, all insects in their winter sleep. We start out in the morning, fresh and full of life, gradually talking ceases, and the procession moves along like a funeral.

Yet in the night, when under the vault of the heavens, with the stars shining all around, when a deep stillness pervades the atmosphere, and save for the contracting sounds of the sand dunes, you hear the sound of the little bells, of human voices, music in the air, etc., such as the poet writes sonnets about. The morning of the 20th, we made an early start, as we had a long heavy day before us, 100 li over heavy roads and sand dunes, but they proved to be easier than those we crossed before reaching Charchien. I sent my men ahead to have a place ready for me, but two parties of travellers had reached Langar before my men, one in which was a young lassie about 11 years. When I arrived I found this party had taken up their abode in the hut, but my men turned them out to a shed with only a roof, exposing them to the cold. I told my men that they should not have done this, as we were better prepared to bear the cold than that little mite. To atone for their action I gave her some sweets and a big chunk of mutton. The other party were small traders carrying Khotan calico, and were sleeping in the open round a log fire. During the night the wind blew some of the hot ashes on the bales of calico, and when they woke in the early morning, it was to find their merchandise destroyed.

A Touch of Human Nature.

This Langar and those at Aqbai and Ketmas are in the hands of a father and two sons, one person in each place. The fourth day our path lay along the foot of the sand hills, and was very heavy travelling; snow the night before covering the sand dunes, and in the evening we reached Shundak. There were many huts untenanted, the only family living in a decent sized house. 15 years ago there were 30 families in residence, now reduced to one, owing to the salinity of the land as well as shortness of water. The head of the household had two wives,

and according to his story, he apparently was a rich man, possessing 2,500 sheep, 18 donkeys, 18 cows, and 36 camels. His home was very comfortable, but what we saw ourselves did not convince us that happiness reigned there. While we were having our food, suddenly we heard a woman screaming and yelling; the men rushed into the room where the row was and found the husband belabouring his first wife with a big stick. They pulled him away; he looked like a man half crazy, being in a terrible passion. He accused his wife of her lack of attention to travellers, and being very lazy. When he had calmed down, he said "When she came to me, she was a beggar, had not a decent garment to put on, and not the smallest piece of jewellery; I have given her bracelets, earrings, rings for her fingers, good clothes, yet she is never satisfied, always asking for this and that." I wondered if the man himself was normal. The loneliness of the place may have affected his mind a little, and one could not but feel a bit sorry for the woman herself to be at the mercy of such a man in such a lonely place. The next morning he prepared a feast for us, when her ladyship was in attendance.

The feast delayed our start so that it was dark when we arrived at the Langar at Endere. A change in scenery, from the barren desert was very pleasant. We had jungle nearly all the way, and a rare place for wild animals. The people say there are wild sheep, cattle and horses in the jungle, and we saw some wild horses in the distance. At the 60 li place it was refreshing to come across a little farm-stead. A lovely spring of water was hard by; as we drew near to the well, Rebekah came along with her bucket, and kindly watered our animals for us. Over 20 of the farm donkeys were waiting for their mistress to give them water.

Traveller Dies on the Way.

In the jungle we saw a tall pole with a cow's tail hanging upon it, indicating a grave; some poor traveller had laid down to die there, far away from home. Often we saw those lonely graves in the desert. My men stopped for a moment, and in an attitude of prayer, prayed for the repose of the departed one. 90 li was the stage. The shades of night creep o'er us, ere we

reached the Langar, one or two of our companions went ahead on our horses. They arrived to find the place full of guests, and many squatted on the courtyard. The place is in charge of two old women who began to shift the travellers a little, and found a room for us. We were glad to get a place, for outside the ground was covered with snow. There were any amount of air holes where the plaster had fallen off the wattles. These Langars do not contain furniture of any kind. In the evening one of the little old women came into our room, and poured into our ears all her troubles and sorrows. A big camel caravan was camped outside, carrying wool to Khotan. Nearing Endere one is struck with the many empty farm-houses. There they stand each in its own ground, plenty of space and bordered by wattles twisted together. They all look so cosy surrounded by trees, but their owners have gone. "To-day the entire population supported by the river amounts to 80. A little land is cultivated with much difficulty, because of the salt; but the main business is herding of sheep. To live by agriculture would be impossible" so wrote Mr Ellsworth Huntingdon in 1906. To-day there remain two women, in charge of the Langar, only.

Buried Cities in the Desert.

Endere was as far as Sir Aurel Stein travelled in his first journey. 15 miles further down the river, among the many interesting relics found was a roll of paper, in Central-Asian Brahmi, which he prized very much. His work was to unearth these old buried towns, and bring to light relics of early years which are counted treasures in the eyes of archaeologists of Europe and America, and find a place in the large museums, though they would not find a place on a second-hand stall in the towns and villages near to where they are found. On the other hand I am carrying "the richest treasure that this world can afford" to these people who have been deprived of it heretofore, that they may carefully examine and peruse it, find it transforms them into God's peculiar treasure to adorn the palaces of heaven for evermore. Called to such a high privilege, the difficulties and loneliness of the way, are little thorns to keep ever fresh before my mind the importance of my task.

This being so I had no time to spend in the cities of the dead, but must hasten on to the towns and villages of the living, nevertheless in order to give our animals a rest, we decided to stay a day in Endere. The ground being covered with snow it was not possible to have a long walk, so I wandered among the trees, taking a snapshot here and there, as there was little comfort inside.

Christmas Eve in the Desert.

December 24th.—A very long day, 110 li. With horses the traveller can get along quick, but with a donkey caravan, at the rate of 10 li an hour it is slow work. Many sand dunes the latter part of the way, and when we reached the Langar it was nearly dark. There was only one room in the hut and it was packed full. There was no room for us in the inn. Two of our companions had gone ahead of us, finding the room full went on further where there was a lot of stumps of Tamarisks, also plenty of prairie grass for the animals. We went in search of them, and after going 10 li, we saw a camp fire about half-a-mile away off the road. It was difficult to find our way among the bushes, as well as to avoid holes hidden by the snow. I kept to my horse. We shouted, but got no answer, and thought they might be shepherds. At last we got to the camp fire, to find our friends sitting under the roots of a huge Tamarisk, the broken trunk being on the top of a mound above. They invited me to sit down and have tea and warm myself, while my men were unloading, fetching fuel, clearing the snow for our camp, and boiling water for tea. When all was ready I joined them, before a roaring log fire. Water was got by melting the snow. This is the only place on the road from Charchien to Keria, where the water is very bitter, and travellers carry water from the stage they leave that morning. We were all tired and hungry, so when the mutton broth in the cauldron was ready, we all did justice to it. Supper over, then flew the thoughts in other directions. Away back 1900 years ago was the first Christmas Eve, the shepherds watching o'er their flocks by night, out on the hills of Bethlehem. Was the ground covered with snow? Was it a starless night, with heavy

clouds covering the sky, if so, the sudden appearance of the angel would have been all the more startling. Then was heard that wonderful message which has thrilled the world ever since, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Now here was I, camping out in the desert, "because there was no room for us in the inn," a messenger of that glad news to the people in this desert region who had never heard it before though 1900 years had elapsed since that message cheered the hearts of those shepherds. I was comforted in the fact that my home friends were unaware that I had undertaken this journey, so their Christmas Eve and Christmas Day would not be clouded by fears for my safety travelling in this region so little known to the outside world. I was a long while in falling asleep, a memorable night not to be forgotten. Yako-tograk is the name of the place.

December 25th (Christmas Day). To-day we arrived at Yer-tungus (place of pigs). Not a long day, but heavy, dunes all the way. We had to cross the river to reach the Langar which stands on the bank of the opposite side. The camel caravan crossed in the evening after much trouble. A man on horseback led one camel and the others were driven into the water to follow, but he had to cross several times ere the whole caravan was got over. The Langar is a hut of 2 rooms built under the shadow of the bank. In 1906 there was a population of 50, now only the family that is in charge of the Langar remains. As there seemed to be plenty of water, it must be the salinity of the land that drives the people elsewhere.

Christmas Dinner in the Desert.

My Christmas Dinner. Indian corn meal porridge with mutton boiled in it, bread brought from Charchien, butter and strawberry jam from the Tihua Mountains, sultanas, grapes from Charchien, and chocolate. Not a bad spread for a desert. I did not see any good haunts for pigs near the road. These wild pigs are a great source of trouble to the Chanteos. The Chinese would soon get rid of them, but as it is an

unclean animal, the Chanteo dare not touch them; their only way of getting rid of them is to drive them into a pit, and kill them with clubs or stones. The next morning climbing up the bank from the river, from the top we beheld the Chekil Peak in the Kueu-lun Range. It was a lovely sight; the morning was bright and clear. We had been seeing little but desert for many a day. There was prairie grass nearly the whole stage, and in the evening we found the Langar on the outskirts of a small jungle, with a small stream hard by. There was only one room, and it a small one. The man, his wife, and four small children and another man occupied the room with me. I slept with my head in a corner, my feet stretching out to the children's feet. The man lay between me and the fire, and spent a lot of time hunting ere he lay down to sleep. The Langar is called Ying-dai-ya. Stage 60 li. The following morning I enjoyed the 10 li walk through the Jungle, then the road began to be heavy, and we had dunes nearly all the way. When still 30 li away we saw the little oasis of Niya 60 to 70 li in length, and 15 to 20 li in width, with a population of 1225 families. Ellsworth Huntington says about 4,000 inhabitants so there has been little change since 1906. Just before entering the oasis there is a grave of a holy man by the side of the road, who receives the prayers of the Chanteos when passing, that his rest may be one of peace. Several high poles are stuck in the ground, on which are fastened two ram's horns, a sheep's head, a chicken's skin and hosts of little flags. It seems to be a relic of a Tibetan custom.

Most Famous Shrine in Central Asia.

We rested a day in this pretty little village, as our animals needed fresh shoes, as there were stony roads ahead. Such is the dilatoriness of the people that at the end of the second day, only two sets of four shoes were ready, so we had to put them on the animals that needed them most. On the second day the village elder, a Yarkand man and a few friends came to see me. He had been to the Swedish Mission in Yarkand, and was acquainted

with Christianity. They expressed surprise that a man of my age should undertake such a long journey. I said, "It is the will of God."—"The will of God must be done," he replied. I presented them with some books. In the evening, several Chanteos who could speak Chinese came in to see me; they had been as far as Kansuh with their merchandise, travelling by the southern route via Lob Nor and Tunhuang, which can only be done in winter time when there is snow and ice. 120 li south of Niya is the famous shrine of Iman Jafir Sadik, supposed to be the most famous shrine in Central Asia. He and many of his faithful followers fell at this spot when fighting against the Khotan infidels. It would have taken me five days to go there and back, so could not afford the time. The first 20 li beyond Niya, the road is stony. At the 40 li place is a small Langar—from the distance it looks no bigger than a dog house. It lies in a hollow, and is in charge of two old women. Miserable little hole, but no doubt welcomed by many a traveller who finds he is unable to reach Niya. But for these Langars, many a man would miss his way, or die of thirst. Niya to Awras—80 li—is sheer desert.

Friendliness of Natives.

At Awras there are two Langars and much grassland near at hand. When there is no snow, the water has to be carried 15 li. In "Sand-buried Cities of Khotan," writes Sir Aurel Stein, of Awras, "The room I occupied was low and smoked badly." This was in 1900. The room we occupied was low and also smoked badly. Very probably we occupied the same room, and all these years the travellers have had to endure the agony of the smoke, because the man is too lazy to spend a little time in sweeping, or repairing the chimney. The next stage was a long one. We were told it was 70 li, and it was 105 li. It was just getting dark when we arrived at Oy-tograck (House of White Poplars). We could find no inn, so the donkey man took us to the house of a friend. We got a very warm, homely reception; we might have been old friends; even the wee laddie of five summers came to me at once and took hold of my hand. Until the room

was ready for us, I was taken to the women's quarters; the mother and two daughters-in-law came and sat around the fire with me. They had no veils on. They admired my long woollen scarf. It was a very homely home, and apparently a very happy home. When my room was ready, I retired there, and after supper the granny, two sons, their wives and the wee laddie came and sat around my fire. One of the sons is a mullah. I told them my errand, speaking mostly through my interpreter, and they listened very attentively. My watch, pocket compass, etc., were all of interest. My teeth were, of course, the chief object of interest. We spent a very enjoyable evening together. The oasis is about the same size as Niya, and the same number of families.

New Year's Day.—A journey of 90 li brought us to Keria (U-tien) where we came in touch with a little of Western Civilisation, there being a post office. Through the kindness of the Postal Commissioner of Tihua, I was able to replenish my little purse. Some letters and books were waiting my arrival. Finding there was no telegraph office there, nor at Khotan, I sent off a letter to Kashgar, enclosing two telegrams telling of my safe arrival, to be transmitted to Tihua and Shanghai, to be cabled home.

Keria.

We crossed the Keria River just before we reached the city. This river at one time flowed far into the Takla-makan desert. Then there was a trade route, right through to Kuchae; now, owing to aridity, the flow of water is much less, and no longer used. The city of Keria stands on a bank which is high and laess, overlooking the river, and in the face of the bank rise tier upon tier of flimsy, wattle-plastered houses, or rather huts. We had to do a good deal of winding about ere we reached the bazaar. Except two of the main streets, the rest of the city is nothing but a lot of little winding lanes and alleys through which it is difficult to find your way out. The city itself is very quiet, many shops not even open, but on bazaar day the streets are densely crowded. Everything that can be bought in the district is exposed for sale on that day. The country people bring in their cotton wool, cotton

thread, to sell to the merchants who weave the cloth: furs, skins, hides, etc. Certain classes of goods are found in certain parts of the city, so it is easy to find what you want. Women wearing their long lace veils, elbowed their way among the crowds, in numbers as many as their men. We arrived on bazaar day and had to keep shouting "Posh, posh"—"Clear the way, clear the way." Many took little heed to the shouting and only got out of the way by a knock on their backs by the corner of the boxes. The inner "Serai" was full of animals and goods belonging to merchants. We managed to get a small room in a corner. It was so dark that I needed a candle to be able to read, and the smoke from the open fire brought tears to my eyes. As soon as I was settled in, I sent my card to the Post Master, for now we had once more got into contact with a bit of Western civilisation. I was sorry to learn that the nearest telegraph office was at Kashgar, 19 days further on, and that it would be necessary to send the telegram by post to Kashgar. It was a disappointment, for I was already far behind my time. I had hoped to reach Khotan for Christmas, and now it was New Year's Day and only at Keria, but consoled myself in knowing that my relatives would not know that I had undertaken the journey till the Christmas festival season was over. The Post Master at once came round to see me, bringing two parcels of Gospels sent from Kashgar, and also a letter from the Postal Commissioner, informing me that he had asked the Post Master to hand over what money I required. The Post Master was very kind; he had already made arrangements with the Aksakal to prepare me a room in his house. Aksakal means "white beard," suggestive of an elder. The Aksakal with whom I stayed is an Indian Mahomedan who represents the British Consul General at Kashgar in any minor matters affecting the Indian population in Keria. There are some 40 or 50 of them. Shortly after the Post Master left, the Aksakal came and invited me to his home. I accepted this kind offer, but did not move till the following day, as I wanted to finish my business in the city with the officials first. Later on I found the officials had gone to Khotan.

I Call Upon the Officials.

In China it was seldom we visited the officials as we passed through the cities, but I was told by the Chanteos, that it would be disrespectful for me, a visitor from a foreign land to pass through and not call upon the officials. Our custom was to send the servant with a card to inform the officials that we were passing through his honourable city. If he was friendly, he would either come and visit us in the inn or invite us to go to the Yamen. I am very sorry to say I was not much enamoured with the stamp of Indian I came in contact with, also heard that they were not much in favour with the people, and I myself suffered at their hands, though members of the same Empire. Their business is that of usurers, a kind of business which is forbidden by Koran. The Chanteos never open pawnshops either. They lend out money at a very high interest, then when the man fails to pay up they seize his land. They were not content with fleecing the Chanteo, they wanted to fleece me also, and I am not without my doubts that my host was in the plot. I had 6 donkeys; one died after reaching Keria; another one I sold to the donkeyman, so had 4 left. On Bazaar day I sent them on the market; soon after they got there, a farmer offered T40 for them, and my man was just in the act of crossing hands with the buyer, when an Indian came up and said to the man,

What are you buying those animals for?" There was quite a crowd standing round. The poor man was afraid, and no one else dare offer to buy them. My men told me who it was, and I told my host, who was no doubt afraid I would tell the Consul-General when I got to Kashgar, so called the man to his house, then called me also, and that man swore an oath that God would kill him if it was he who had stopped the sale, when I saw he had gone so far I told my host to let the matter drop. He knew I did not believe a word the fellow said. This man had a very funny eye, which no one could mistake and he was the only fellow among the Indians who had such an eye. I then told my host I would take them on with me to Khotan. Later on he said that a friend of his would come and look at them; the man did, and after much

haggling I sold them at a loss of T7.50 compared with the other man's price. I firmly believe that my host got this man to come and buy them for himself. The Indians were certainly no credit to our Empire. Some years ago the Consul-General had to send several back to India, because of their misdeeds.

I was nevertheless thankful and got to Keria without the loss of a single animal. The poor donkeys that perish in the desert every year must be a large number. Every day we passed carcasses; some had been dead a long while, others more recently, and some had just breathed their last breath. There were always vultures near at hand to pounce on the prey. One morning seven vultures were in the middle of the road, and did not seem to be afraid; two of them remained until we were within a few yards of them. In place of the donkeys I bought two young stallions for the rest of the journey, one for my servant and one for the luggage. I rode my own mare. We need no longer to lay in a store of food or grain.

Unwanted Companions.

It was a great relief to get to Keria, and have a good bath and change of garments. Sleeping out, my garments came in contact with the garment of my men, so I had attracted a goodly number of unwanted companions to my side, only always conscious of their presence during the day, but especially so at night. They always worked hardest on the night shift. Yet they were not so numerous as the night when we had finished our journey across the Ordos in 1892. That night we locked our roof door in the inn and began the hunt, and when I had murdered 500 I stopped counting. There is not very much love lost between the Chinese and the Chanteos, very little intercourse between them except on business. Hardly any social intercourse. After leaving Korla, I let my beard grow and had it trimmed Chanteo fashion, also I wore a Chanteo "chapan," a long coat, as it was too warm to wear my heavy fur. A Chinese merchant who came to the inn to see me when I arrived expressed disgust at my following Chanteo style. I

said, "When I came to China, I wore Chinese clothes, and also grew a queue; now that I am in Chanteo country, I wear the Chanteo style of clothes. Does not your proverb say, Sui-hoiang, Ruch-hsiang (that is, "if you go to Rome, you do as the Romans do.")—"Puh-hao, puh-hao" ("Not good, not good, not good, you do not want to follow their customs"), he replied. After 12 days' stay, we hurried off on our forward journey.

Keria to Khotan (Hotien).

Distance, 440 li, 5 stages. Out of the oasis of Keria, desert again with very sandy roads. Kuen-lun Mts. on our left as a background. We passed one lonely Langar on the way and in the evening, after a stage of 80 li we reached the pretty little oasis of Hala-kuh. These desert marches are very dreary. The ground was all covered with snow, and my servant and I were now alone; having parted with the donkeys, we had no longer need of a donkeyman. The second day brought us to the little oasis of Chira, supposed to have a population of 10,000. It is now a district, and has its own official, who resides in a new Yamen. He was away at Khotan. Grapes and melons very cheap. There is no outlet for them. They are all consumed in the oasis. To the north and north-east of Chira are several ruins, even as far as five miles into the desert; there are the old ruins, Rawak and Dandam-ulik, which is evident that many years ago there was a much bigger flow of water in the river. When we were there, there was a great scarcity of water; the people were breaking up the ice and carrying it to their homes. They had never known such a hard winter. From Chira to Bash-tograk (Five Poplars) we passed two little rest-houses at the 40 and 60 li places. After passing the latter, the little black stallion did not want to go on and would persist in going first to one side and then another; at last we discovered that the belly band had rubbed the skin badly, so it was necessary to put the load on the animal the man was riding. This necessitated him walking; however, I said to him: "We have still 25 li to go; I will ride 10 li, then you can ride 10 li." The road was very heavy with sand.

Trouble With My Servant.

When I had still about half a li to go, he shouted to me, "Get down, I want to ride; I cannot walk, my foot is sore." I am not accustomed to have orders from my servant, so said to him, "I told you that I would get down when we had gone 10 li; we still have half a li to go, then I will get down." He sat down on the road side, saying "I cannot go any further."—"All right," I said, "give me the bridles. You can stay, but I am going forward." I knew it would be no easy task for me, but was determined not to give in to him, though we were out in the desert alone, so off I went. I had not got very far, when he ran after me, overtook me, saying "What are you going to do?"—"Do?" I said, "Do? I am going to the inn; if you care to stay out in the desert all night, I do not." He laughed outright. A little further on, the 10 li stage was reached, and I was going to get down. "Do not get down," he said, "my foot is better." Nevertheless, I got down. When he had ridden 5 li, he got down and made me ride. We were better friends after that; he knew that I was master. There are four Langars at Bash-tograk. We met a party of men going to Chira, to fetch grain for the Khotan officials.

A Fertile Plain.

The first part of the stage to Lob there are very heavy sand dunes to be crossed, making it very hard on the animals; 40 li from Lob we cleared out of the sand dunes to a fine level road, the last 10 li through an avenue of trees. The mountains receded at Chira, but here they were much nearer and a vast plain of Piedmont gravel ran up to the foot of the mountains. From the position on the maps, I expected Lob to be another Langar, and instead it is very large oasis which included Khotan as well. A rich fertile plain. There were supposed to be 20,000 families in the Lob District alone. The whole way to Khotan is through an avenue of trees, in some places four deep. The road is very broad and level as a pancake; a splendid motor road. I was glad to get to Khotan.

The purpose I set out for was accomplished; I had covered the virgin soil, and left portions of the Scriptures and Pilgrim's Progress in every place I passed through, except Endere and Yat-tograk, where there were only women in charge of the Langars. At Endere the two old women were both old and stupid, and at Yak-tograk the woman's husband was in prison. A strange story was told us. A man and his boy of 11 or 12 summers left the Langar one morning. After going so far the father told his boy to go slowly on with the horse. The father did not turn up again, and the wee laddie was found on the road crying. A search party was sent out to find him, but after many days the search proved fruitless, so the woman's husband was arrested by the official on suspicion. It is supposed the man had gone off in the wrong direction in the first place, there being no landmark, had wandered far into the desert. I told the story in Khotan, but no-one seemed to have heard of it.

“ My Thorn in the Flesh. ”

It was a great joy to realise that this little known region of desert, ruins and buried cities, with a scanty population, had now got the word of God in their midst. I do not consider the journey to be a very hard one, a trifle lonely, but then for nearly 39 years I have been travelling off and on, in different parts of China, chiefly on the borders of Mongolia and Tibet (Koko-Nor) so accustomed to rough it. A person right out from home might think differently. It was the best season to travel. Mutton could be kept for any length of time, and what is more nourishing and satisfying to the hungry traveller at the end of the day journey, than plenty of good wholesome bread and mutton soup, a real feast in the desert. A few luxuries such as biscuits to nibble by the way, a little chocolate, sugar and tea is really all that is required. My only drawback was my wretched servant, who was as lazy as he was long. I had to look after the horses to see that they were fed properly, and also to see that nothing was rubbing their backs, and once a sore appeared, to see it doctored every day till it was well. I had

to call him at least twice every morning ere he got up, and if he did not move, I sat up, then he got up, and I lay down again till my cup of tea was ready. He was very immoral and had to suffer for his misdeeds. He was my thorn in the flesh to keep me humble.

The Educational System.

The most striking thing on the way is the depopulation of places owing to the salinity of the soil, and the aridity of the climate. The sad part of the journey was the lonely graves, marked by a long pole, with a cow's tail hung on them. They had gone till they could go no further, it may have been sickness or thirst. The preponderance of girls to boys is very marked, the parents having great difficulty in getting their girls off their hands. In Chaklik I was told a girl could be got for a few dollars, or if it was a good home, they would let her go for nothing. Several times on the road I was asked why I did not take one. The Chanteos are much keener on the education of their children than the Dungans. The Dungan system is not satisfactory, for they teach what really is a dead language in China; Arabic. Of every 100 boys that learn Arabic, only one per cent. can make any real use of it. It is only useful to the student who wishes to become a Mullah. Why they do not teach them the language of the country of their adoption, the language which they daily use, has always been a puzzle to me. It is a great disadvantage to themselves and consequently very few of them ever become civil officials. To have the ah-heng to come and teach them Arabic one hour a day, and follow the China educational curriculum, would be much better, and make it compulsory that all the scholars should attend worship on the Fridays. The Chantoe Ah-hengs teach the Chantoe language in their mosques. I saw girls as well as boys going to and fro from school with their books in their hands. The officials find it very difficult to get the Chanteos to send their children to schools, which belong to the Government. There are at present a few prominent Mohammedan officials who are trying to persuade their people to send their children to Government schools, but

a very hard task is before them, as it means taking the bread out of the mouths of the Mullahs, who will oppose with all their might secretly.

Khotan.

The long looked for traveller arrived at last. For over a month letters had been arriving at the Post Office for me, but no one knew who I was and what was my errand. The officials had not been apprized of my visit officially, as I had not notified my departure in Tihua. Through the kindness of the officials we are permitted to go where we like in the Province selling books, etc., without having an escort, which we appreciated very much, as oft an escort might be a hindrance to our work. Post marks on the letters gave the impression that I was an Englishman, so the Indians were all alert. My arrival set their minds at ease, though the long expected traveller turned out only to be a missionary, the reception was of the warmest kind, probably being an Englishman had something to do with it. The rooms prepared for me were not very convenient, so I moved to an inn, and had hardly got settled in. when the Indian Aksakal came and invited me to stay in his residence, which I accepted, as I found there were undesirable women in the inn. The Aksakal offered me the large Guest Room which would be fine in warm weather, opening out to a large garden, and where the Consul-General stays on his visits, but the weather being cold I preferred one of the smaller rooms. They were all very kind, ready to help me in every way. The next day I paid my respects to the Tao-tai, District Magistrate, and the Commander of the troops, who received me very kindly, the former preparing a feast for me the following evening. The District Magistrate and Commander returned my calls, the former also preparing a feast for me at which were all the chief men in the city, as at the Tao-tai, District Magistrate's feast, and ere I left the Tao-tai returned my call. In all my long experience in China, I have never met such a courteous, homely gentlemanly, kindly Official, I shall never forget his kindness. With the exception of a few Chinese, Dun-

gan's and Indians the population is all Chanteos. The streets are all very dark. As it is very hot the greater part of the year, the streets were all covered in with straw mats. I suppose it is too much trouble to uncover them for a few months, but it makes the place look cold as no sun can shine through. The business part is one long street through the suburb and city.

Jade and Carpets.

Khotan is famous for its Jade and Carpets, so I expected to see some large factories but was doomed to disappointment. Except a factory in charge of an Armenian, which had about 70 hands, all the other were very small firms, employing very few hands. My visit to the jade firms were still more disappointing. Small rooms 15 X 10 feet with 8 to 10 hands. The men were working their crude machines on both sides of the room, and there was only room to pass. The method of working must have been the same 1,000 years ago. The wheel was of round pieces of tin or zinc the thickness of a biscuit tin. It was worked with a foot belt. From these small factories are turned all kinds of articles such as bracelets, wine cups, boxes, etc., and sent all over China, where they have a great reputation. At the Armenian factory carpets, rolls of silk and silk handkerchiefs, gents collars, etc., are made, and exported to Constantinople. The silk is very strong and also expensive. I expected to see better ventilation, roomy and clean-looking rooms. The owner is over 80, and has a nice clean little home, so I came to the conclusion he had given up hopes of ever making the workmen keep the place clean. Calico is also woven and sent throughout the Province. In passing through towns and villages the spinning wheel was everywhere in evidence. The women and girls sit outside their doors spinning and chatting. On Bazaar days the thread spun is sold to the weavers. I'm afraid in the near future this industry will be curtailed, as now the Government have built a large cotton mill in Tihua, where they are turning out over 50 pieces of 40 yards each every day. At present it is used for soldiers' uniform. It is surprising to me that the Government have not

extended their telegraph service to Yarkand, Khotan and Keria, as they have done to the other parts of the Province. From a political point of view, apparently they are not afraid of their neighbours in the South, or the service would have been extended but from a business point of view it would be a great boon. The distance from Kasgar to Khotan is about 430 miles, and to Keria 150 more. Rev. G. W. Hunter of the China Inland Mission, that intrepid missionary pioneer, who has been itinerating in Sinkiang for 26 years, and knows more of that Province than any other white man, visited Khotan many years ago, and since then members of the Swedish Mission in Yarkand have visited the city, so I was not working on virgin ground, any more. Reaching Khotan, I accomplished what I set out for, viz., to visit this little-known region of jungles, desert, and sand dunes, with little oases here and there, and lonely Langars and deposit the world's richest treasure, which was gladly received wherever I went. The people treated me with the greatest courtesy. Though it was the coldest winter in the memory of the inhabitants, and I have been the victim yearly, of chilblains on hands and feet, I got over the journey without suffering in the least, thus the promise being fulfilled to me which I got when starting "As thy days so shall thy strength be."

A Native Legend.

After 5 days' rest for ourselves and the animals we set out once more to tackle the 3 days' journey to Yarkand. It was a lovely morning. Some of the Indians escorted me out of the city. We passed through well-watered land, rich soil, passed through 2 bazaars arriving at Dawa in the afternoon. After the first 40 li the road became heavier with sand. The next day of 120 li was a long stage. It was cold, the sky clouded, and a light snowfall. The first 40 li there is a fine big road built through marshy land, then very heavy sandy road. In the evening we got to the oasis of Pialma, with a population of 600 families, where there has been a gradual shrinkage in the water supply during the last 30 years, that now

grain has to be bought from the Khotan oasis. The innkeeper told me an interesting legendary story about the water supply. Some 200 years ago, a holy man riding on a mare went to the spring to water his animal. Suddenly a stallion came out of the cavity, and ran the mare into the spring, and he never saw it again. The holy man was so exasperated that he hired 200 men to carry 3,000 pounds of wool, and had it pushed into the spring, stopping the water which finally found its way out at a place called A-rab-a lak "water out of a rock." This place is 60 li from Kargalik, 400 li away from the original spring. The innkeeper was a very nice old man and his daughter-in-law charming. She met us at the door with such a cheerful smile, that our long day's journey was soon forgotten. Soon she lighted a fire for us, had boiling water and put on a very pretty felt on the kang; everything we asked for, seemed a pleasure to do. One would almost be tempted to go that route again just to get that cheerful welcome. This was our oasis in the desert journey. How much brighter this world would be, if we could always bear that cheerful smile on our faces, life would be much easier. Both she and her father-in-law wished us God-speed on the following morning. I cannot remember ever having such a happy experience before in travelling.

Pigeon Sanctuary.

We started off with light hearts; a fresh layer of snow covered the ground; our path lay over sand dunes; we were on the lookout for the "Pigeon Sanctuary." Up among the sand dunes we saw it on the right. It consisted of a little group of huts surrounded by sand dunes on 3 sides, and a wee little oasis on the remaining side. Some thousands of pigeons are supposed to live in these huts and are fed by the offerings of passers by, as well as by grain bought by money endowments from pious worshippers, one or two men are in charge. Sir Aurel Stein gives the following account in his book "Sand Buried Ruins of Khotan,"—"They are believed to be the offspring of a pair of doves which miraculously appeared from the

heart of Iman Sharia Padshah who died here in battle with the infidel, i.e., the Buddhists of Khotan. The youthful son of one of the Shaiks attached to the shrine was alone present to tell me the story. Many thousands had fallen on both sides, and it was impossible to separate the bodies of the faithful Shaidis from those of the Kafirs. Then at the prayer of one of the surviving Mussalmans the bodies of those who had found martyrdom were miraculously collected on one side, and the doves came forth to mark the remains of the fallen leader. From gratitude all travellers on the road offer food to the holy birds."

It was a cold morning, snow everywhere so when we passed we only saw about half-a-dozen pigeons. 20 li beyond the Sanctuary is Ak-Langar, large building made of brick and a private Meshid "Prayer House" on the opposite side of the road. This is the half-way rest house. All the other Langars being wattled mud plastered huts, this brick building makes an impression on the traveller. Surely there must be something special about the building of it. Maybe a thanksgiving for some special mercies on the way, by some wealthy Mussulman. We passed over a 100 donkeys and several strings of camels carrying merchandise. Much sand all the way and in the evening arrived at Tsan-Kuei or Raskuei. Here again there is a gradual shrinkage of water. Those who came in last to the oasis have to go out first when the water is not sufficient. This shortage of water is a great anxiety, in fact, all along the south of the Takla-Makan desert. The inn in which we stayed, the innkeeper and his wife are both "Hadji" that is "holy ones" for they had both made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The wife came to find us a room, a tall, strong, healthy looking woman, wearing a red coloured veil that reached nearly to her feet, and every time she spoke to anyone, eased the veil up to free her mouth and her face was not visible. She was handsomely dressed for an innkeeper's wife. On leaving I gave her a gospel to give to her husband who was sick, but he soon sent it back with a curt reply that he did not want it.

Child Marriage.

This day's journey was only 60 li. Less sand, more shrubbery, a few poplar trees. The oasis itself is a pretty one, 1,000 families and plenty of water and to spare. It is possible to divert some of the water to Tsankuei where there is a shortage. I said to some of the people, "Is it possible for some of the water to reach Tsankuei if diverted?" "Yes," they replied. "Could it not be so arranged that some of the water be diverted to Tsankuei, where there is a shortage," I said. "No it cannot be done," was the reply. "Why?" I queried. "Because it has been our water for generations," they answered. "Surely the Tao-tai could order it to be done?" "No, he cannot, nor can the Governor, or the President, it is Mudji water for Mudji only." It reminded me of what Naboth said to King Ahab when he wanted to buy his vineyard. "The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. So people in one place must leave their homes owing to failure of water, while their neighbours have more than abundant, even running to waste because of the law of the Medes and Persians. On our way to Guma we met caravans of camels carrying hemp seed to Khotan which is used for smoking, almost in the same way as opium. The difference is that the hemp seed is put into a pipe the shape of the water pipe, and hot ashes put on the top. They told me that the craving is similar to the opium craving. It is very amusing to see several strings of huge camels, each string of 7 or 8 being led along by a wee donkey. A rope is tied to the donkey's saddle and the other end to the camel's nose. "A little child shall lead them" was the first thought that sprung into my mind, as our helper in the inn this evening was a pretty little damsel of 11 summers, wearing a lovely plate-shaped embroidered cap, a dark jacket, and a red skirt. She was to be married at the New Year. The New Bill passed in India about child marriage, should have its counterpart in this Province. Poor little mite. What a boon it would be if the Chinese Government would follow the

example set in India by raising the age of marriage to 16. The better class as a rule do not marry their girls till they are 18, but among the poor there are some very early marriages. It would give the children a few more happier years and fellowship with their fellow playmates. Oh! the untold blessing of being born in a country where the little lassies grow up without the fear of being sent out early, or being forced to marry against their wish. Happy girls of the British Isles, inheritors of the freedom bought with the blood of our ancestors, pray for the release of your more unfortunate sisters in other lands. I offered a Gospel to the innkeeper's son who was afraid to take it, but later in the evening when he knew us better, he asked for it on his own accord, the people sometimes have a fear that it may involve them in some way or other.

Trouble at the Inn.

On our way through desert land, the 5th day, there were huge baskets about eight feet high, narrow at the top, but very wide at the bottom, and filled with stones. Formerly there were posts similar to telegraph posts, but they were continually being stolen. On our way we saw a man in the distance on horseback coming toward us; then he stopped and the horse stood still till we came up to them. "What is the matter?" we asked. "My horse will not go a step farther" he said. He returned to his home 20 li away, I am rather inclined to think that he had had trouble in his home and gone off in a peak, then changed his mind. At dusk we arrived at the city of Guma, but with the streets being covered in, it was dark. There was no decent room in the first inn, so the innkeeper kindly sent a boy to lead us to another inn. The gate was open wide, but we were met by the innkeeper's wife who apparently did not want us and said "We have no water." "We can buy water on the street" we replied, "I have no husband," she next said. "That does not matter as other inns we have stayed at there were only widows," we said. "There are no empty rooms" was her next cry. "Here is an empty room, there are other guests

besides us; you open your inn for guests, we came, the gate was wide open, so you are obliged to let us have it," so we settled in. In the evening her husband came into the room with a gift of pomegranates to atone for his wife's rudeness, the next morning, escorting us out of the city to the north road and as we left the inn, the wife asked us not to take the matter to heart and wished us God-speed. It is possible that she may have had trouble with other foreigners. With a little patience and courtesy as a rule you can win them over. This day was a long dreary journey, all desert and very heavy and sandy road. We passed two small Langars by the way. Chulak Langar is a small oasis. Formerly there were 50 families, now only 35. We stayed in a room with a granny, son and son's wife and a little girl aged 11. They slept on the floor and we slept on the kang. The fuel was only very fine shrubbery, and the fire had to be fed continually. The weather was cold, snow falling, and there was precious little heat from the fire. We all sat around the fire and chatted till it was time to retire. The family were very homely. Save for the wee oasis the outlook was very bleak desert, as far as the eye could see. One wondered what it could be to keep these people living and clinging to such a spot. There is such a thing as the call of the prairie, or the sighing for the mountains and moors, or the restlessness of the traveller born. Can it be possible that some mysterious unexplainable feelings bind them to these lonely spots, where they are in touch with all that is vast in the heavens above and the weirdness of the desert below. One wonders, could they be happy anywhere else?

Mishap on the Road.

Chulak Langar to the city of Kargalik will be remembered as the second hardest day in all the journey. All sandy desert for 135 li (45 miles). It was dark when we arrived. Kargalik is the city where travellers India bound branch off to cross the Karakoram Pass, therefore it is an important place. From this city onward to Karkand we were free from the dreary desert. A good motor road all the way, the road lined with trees. Crossed 5 bridges

over the Yarkand River. We arrived at Posgam on Bazaar Day. The 3 cities of Posgam, Kargalik and Guma have all large populations without a single missionary. Money and men forthcoming in plenty for scientific expeditions, to find the treasures of the cold earth, yet how feeble is the response to the greatest and most important call, to engage in the greatest and most enduring work, i.e. seeking treasures for the Kingdom of Heaven. Posgam to Yarkand is 70 li. We had travelled 55 stages when we left Posgam that morning without a single accident, but hardly had we got away from the city when a strap broke, and down came the boxes. Fortunately the animal was not frightened for there were a lot of trappings round its legs. It made me thankful for the 55 days without accident. Jan. 30th we arrived in Yarkand. It was Chinese New Year's Day. There was no stir as the Chinese are a mere handful compared with the Chantoe. Entering the suburb I saw red scrolls outside a door, and a few Chinese in their best garments standing, so enquired for the Swedish Mission. It happened to be Bazaar Day; the streets were packed with the people. We had to shout "posh, posh," all the way. In passing through a Bazaar in a previous town, I heard my servant cry out to the people to clear the way. I thought he said "hosh, hosh," so I being on in front also cried "hosh, hosh." When we got to the inn he was almost bursting with laughing, so I asked him what he was laughing at. He said "What did you call out?" I replied "hosh, hosh." "Hosh," he said "means pleased." He said that the people were all laughing. I enjoyed the joke. I got a warm welcome from the missionaries who knew I was coming. My letter had not reached them.

Civic Reception.

Yarkand is the great commercial centre of Chinese Turkestan. Here the routes branch off to India, Afghanistan, Khotan and to the North Kashgar and Tashkent. It is a cosmopolitan city, for here are men from Leh, Kashmir, Gilgit, Baltistan, Peshawer, etc. Large caravans of merchandise come in from India, but the dry goods chiefly from Russia. The chief business is

done in the suburb. Kurki is the language spoken. We rested 5 days enjoying the kind hospitality of the missionaries. Every day large numbers of patients came to the dispensary. There is a Boys' and Girls' School also an Orphanage. Like all Mahomedan countries the work is slow, but gradually gaining ground. The members of a Dutch Scientific Expedition were living in a large house outside the city. A lady was one of the party. The magistrate was exceedingly kind, prepared a feast for the foreign community of which I was the chief guest. The dining hall was lit up with carbon lamps and the table spread with cutlery, water glasses, wine glasses, in fact, just like home. The magistrate was a Chehkiang man, accustomed to meet Europeans, well informed, speaks English, and has a family of 8 boys and girls. Up to this city, 55 stages I had had no escort, and would fain continued my journey without an escort, but the magistrate would not hear of it, saying, "You are an honourable guest from a far country and it would be very impolite on our part to let you travel alone." Feb. 5th left Yarkand for Kashgar. 5 stages, about 150 miles. Outside the city the fields were covered with snow and ice. The Yarkand River has many branches, besides many canals, and the water had overflowed into the fields. The high mountains to the east were hidden by the haze which is so common in this region. The little Meshide or Prayer Rooms by the wayside which are to be seen on the wayside everywhere on this south route are very interesting. The Mahomedans are a very religious people. The traveller arrives at one of these little Meshides. It is the hour of prayer; he dismounts, fastens his horse to the post near at hand, takes his carpet or felt into the room and performs his devotions. The room is always open. It is just a plain mud hut or building, not high with a frontage of low railings on each side of the doorway. Nothing that can be carried away. No furniture stool or form, just the bare mud floor. Simplicity itself. Civilisation robs us much of that simple homely life of the Eastern nations. In the Homeland, what a boon it would be to many a man or woman hard pressed with cares and burdens just to be able to step aside into a small sanctuary or church for

a few minutes of quiet meditation and prayer. What a lift it would be, but our churches are nearly all locked.

Civilisation robs us of much of the simplicity of life as seen in the East. We are the losers. Out here a friend turns up unexpectedly, receives a warm welcome. The bedding which he carries on his horse, is laid on the kang where he will sleep with the family, and heartily join in the ordinary fare. There is no rush or bustle, he at once becomes a member of the family during his stay. How different in the homeland.

Visit to the British Consul General.

The first day out from Yarkand we passed through the village where some years ago an Indian merchant was brutally murdered. He slept outside the door, the weather being hot; during the night the owner of the house and his brother killed him, buried the goods and the cart, also the body. It was a long while ere it was found out that he was missing. The merchant drove his own cart. Some years after he was traced to this village, the two men shot, and their home entirely destroyed. The third day was very dreary, but in the evening we were recompensed by being hospitably entertained at the Swedish Mission in the busy little city of Yengi-hissar, and two more days brought us to Kashgar. We first arrived at the new city where the magistrate was a friend of ours, his home being in Tihua. We did not stay but made for our destination 20 li (7 miles) at the Old City. Just outside the New City, Captain Mann, of the Central Asian Mission, met us. He was in Tihua last year, so we had much to talk about, and brought me the welcome news that our British Consul General had kindly invited me to be his guest during my stay. The road was lined with willows and poplars, very broad and kept in good repair. The high city walls loomed in the distance. We passed through a small village then came to the premises of the Swedish Mission on to the city, leaving it on the right, we rode parallel with the city wall for some distance, struck to the right, entered the Consulate Gate, where the Indians in their scarlet uniforms gave us a "salaam." The taotai was in then

with the Consul, giving me time for a wash and trim up for lunch. Mr Williamson, the Consul General and Captain Sheriff the Vice-Consul gave me a very hearty welcome. It was very nice to be among one's own countrymen again. My hosts were charming, making me feel at home at once, and I shall ever retain in memory their kindness the three weeks I stayed as their guest.

Description of Kashgar.

The position of the Consulate is the finest in Kashgar. It stands on the edge of a high bank of loess, overlooking the River Tumen. On a clear day looking northward the view is exceptionally fine, stretching far away to the snow-covered mountains. The premises are large, lovely gardens, though I was not there at a time to see the foliage in its fullness. Plenty of fruit trees. The "Tombs of the Kings," the early rulers of Kashgaria, is one of the famous sights at Kashgar. The Swedish Mission have large premises outside the city gate. Some hundreds of patients attend the Dispensary every day; the numbers of church members is still small, all Chanteos. A hospital will be built as soon as ground can be obtained. The printing press provides the literature for the Province. At the New City there is a Chinese Boys' School. Several new workers came out last autumn, and they hope soon to be able to occupy Khotan. They have had a good deal of opposition to contend with, but the leaven is working slowly and surely. My friend in the New City invited us all to a feast at his Yamen. His father was formerly a high official in the Province. A visit in the city strikes one as if the place had been built without any idea of beauty or comeliness. Not a decent street in the whole city; they wind in all directions, and it is very easy to lose one's way. The Russian railways reaching to Andijan, which is only 10 days' journey from Kashgar, means the pouring in of Russian goods into the market, and the Soviet Government are pushing their hardest to secure the whole of the foreign trade, which means that goods they themselves do not produce they purchase from other countries, chiefly from Germany. Wool, hides, furs, etc., are exports

to Russia. Some years ago a very exciting incident took place. The Taotai, who was a Mahommedan, was a very cruel man, cutting off the hands and feet of prisoners, and many innocent people suffered at his hands. He had a very large harem. His actions aspiring to greater power was feared by the Governor, who sent soldiers to arrest him, ere they got there another Mahommedan official made long marches, reached Kashgar before the official sent by the Governor his soldiers reached Kashgar at night unknown to the Taotai, who was not prepared for them; they rushed his Yamen seized him, and shot him, and later nailed him to a cross. His son came to the rescue but was shot on the way. This official then seized the reins and is at present Taotai in Kashgar. The people were all glad the tyrant was killed. He had not a friend to risk his life for him. The frost just breaking up making the roads very bad delayed my getting away earlier, so decided to stay a week longer, also to have the pleasure of having the company of a fellow countryman as far as Maral-bashi.

Return Journey to Urimtsi.

March 4th. Set out on my return journey of forty-seven stages. Kashgar at one end, Urimtsi at the other. Travelling in these regions, it does no good to think about the stages, it makes them no shorter. Set the mind on the stage for the day, get over it as well as you can, have a good meal at the end, go to sleep, then wake up to tackle another. It is wonderful how one gets over the longest journey.

We got a good send off, the Consul General and vice-Consul accompanying us a short way. The roads were very bad with mud and slush, so we desired them to come no further. We were indeed sorry to say good-bye to two such charming men. My travelling companion Mr Ludlow, who is going to the Tien-shan, "Mountains of Heaven," to shoot birds and beasts, catch butterflies, had two carts, 2 horses, 3 men, besides the carters, a big spaniel. I had 3 horses and one man. We had one man as escort. It was the end of the Ramadam fast; the natives were all dressed in their

best. Travelling with us, was Capt. Mann's servant and his wife, and wife's sister. I asked my man where the sister was going to, and he said, "She is going with her sister to Bugur." We only went 40 li the first day, owing to the bad roads. The following day we went 30 li. The escort went ahead to get a room, but it was a very dark room. Ludlow then remembered the Consul told him to stay at the home of a Bai "rich man," just before reaching the inn. The Aksakal went off on his horse, and we followed slowly. A fine big room was laid at our disposal, with large Khotan carpets on the floor; the ceiling had a cornice. March 6th, we reached the city of Faizabad. We had much difficulty in crossing a marsh. On the 7th, we passed through flat marshy, salt country. My man and the carters had a big row over 2 lis which he said he had lent the carters. On the 8th we recrossed the Kashgar River; good road but desert nearly all the way. On the 9th, there were 2 roads, one for carts, and one for people riding animals or foot passengers. We took the short road, for it was much shorter. Unfortunately, 2 of the bridges were washed away, and the place of crossing was very deep, and the current very strong. A poor woman who had just crossed was wet from head to foot. I let my man go first on his horse, leading the pack animal. He got over alright, but the pack animal fell in the water, the strong current carried my boxes off its back, and they were sailing away at a rare rate when my man caught them. There was just one plank over the water, and it was narrow; having a very dizzy head, I could not cross it, so a rope was stretched from one side to the other, held tight, and I got across. My man took my horse over. We had not gone far when we had to cross the same river, the bridge being washed away. The pack animal fell again, and my boxes got another ducking. We had to travel a long distance in water, and lost our way. We made for a farm in the distance; the farmer kindly led us to the main road.

Ride Through a Jungle.

The 10th day was through jungle. Pleasant for riders, but very heavy for carts,

there being much sand. It was a short stage of 30 li. Wild ducks in abundance, also wild pigs. We saw a crested skylark and hooded magpies. Capt. Mann's servant gave his wife a good thrashing. She is a very lively creature, full of fun, and he never says a word just "mum." Dried all the goods in the boxes. On the 11th day it was jungle all the way, and on the 12th day reached Maral-bashi. A lake on the south side of the road nearly the whole of this day's journey. The Aksakal came out to meet Mr Ludlow, and invited us to stay at his home a little way out of the city, fine spacious premises. Mr Selin of the Dutch expedition had arrived the day before from Yarkand. The magistrate invited us to a feast in his Yamen, spread out in foreign style. He was a very nice man and could speak English. The city has a population of 6,000 families. We rested a day here. A suspicion I had had on the road I found out to be true while I was staying here, viz. that the young girl who was with her sister was going to Tihua as the man's wife. He had deceived me, so I told him that she could only go with us as far as her sister goes, that it was impossible that she could go along with us after. He was already married, and had children in Tihua. We left Mr Ludlow at Maral-bashi, so travelled along with the other three. The two sisters were good singers, and often sang together as we went along, the younger one playing the guitar; they were splendid walkers, though they had two donkeys to ride on. The magistrate sent an escort, but he did not turn up till evening. Someone had seen him on the street, after we had gone, and reported to the official, who sent off another man who caught us up on the way. The second man had got orders to go on with us; the other man wanted him to return, but he would not, so he had to return and probably received a few lashes for failure of duty. Our new escort was a fine fellow, for the road. When nearing the end of the day's stage he would go ahead, get the room ready, and water boiling, and helped in every way as far as Aksu.

Trouble with Servants.

Maral-bashi to Aksu is 9 stages. Jungle and desert nearly all the way. The young folks were splendid company except when there had been trouble with their men-folk. One morning Capt. Mann's servant and his wife were behind, we turned around to see if they were coming, and caught them in the act of kissing each other. We all had a good laugh. Another day when we caught them in the morning she was crying; he had beaten her. One evening in the inn my servant wanted his young wife to play on the guitar, and for some reason or other, she refused, he fired up and struck her a heavy blow on the face which made her howl and she fled to my room for safety. A young bride of only 3 weeks to be treated so, did not give promise of a happy life. One evening just after we arrived, the escort had a row on the street. After reaching the inns in the evenings we always got a boy to lead our animals about till they cooled down. A man offered to lead them, but he wanted too much money, so the escort refused, and the man wanted to hinder others from leading them, so the escort got angry, and my man joined with him to help, so I went out and the trouble ceased. On the 9th day we arrived at the city Aksu in which there is both a magistrate and a Taotai. There are 3 main streets. The people were courteous. The magistrate is fond of his wine and when I called he seemed as if he had just been on the spree. The Taotai was very kind, gave me a very warm reception, and paid a return call, also sending a nice present of tea, and biscuits. All foreign travellers speak highly of him for courtesy shown. Now I found Capt. Mann's servant and his wife are not going further so I told the man that he could not take his wife further, that he must come back for her. When he found I was firm in the matter he called a mullah to write out a paper for divorce. I was not sorry for the girl for my man is a very wicked fellow. When in Kashgar I got a fresh supply of gospels, tracts, and other literature to give away on the road as we went along. Some were afraid to take them, not knowing what they were, but as a rule they were accepted with thanks.

Asku is the third city we have passed throughout without a single messenger of the "Glad News."

Bazaar Day in an Eastern City.

Aksu to Kuchae is also 9 stages. The first day out was 100 li; trees on both sides of the roads, buds just beginning to sprout. To-day I got a touch of the sun, which brought on ague, and every bone in my body ached. The people in the inn were very kind. The place is called Jam, but I contented myself with bread and butter. The next day 45 li, desert all the way. The third day a very long day called by the people 180 li (60 miles) owing to it being such a dreary road, but it is probably only 40 miles. After travelling 65 li we came to a small hut or Langar where there was neither food for man or beast, only a little hot water; we pushed on to T'ien-shui, a place of 2 or 3 houses, where we intended to stay for the night. After we had unloaded and had tea and a little rest, my servant informed me that there was neither straw nor peas for the animals. The innkeeper thought we were only taking a rest and going on, so we had to load up once more. The route lay through a stony pass and when we had come out on the other side, a lovely view presented itself before us, of a wide valley leading up to the snow-covered mountains of T'ien-shan. The village of Takki is a long street of houses, the innkeeper a Tientsin man. As we had gone beyond the regular stage, the next day only went about 30 li to a scattered village called Kush-ti-mu, and stayed in the official quarters. The magistrate of the city of Pai arrived soon after us. The heads of the village were out to welcome him, and had food provided for him. He ordered food to be taken to my room and made me share with him. It was very kind of him, a complete stranger. Knowing that I belonged to the Protestant Mission in Tihua was my open-sesame. This day's journey, the ground was very marshy. One poor horse had got into a bog, and three men were struggling with ropes to pull it out. We had started from Kashgar none too late for in some places it was very difficult to get safe through the marshy

places. The next day we arrived at the city of Pai-cheng 70 li. We went slowly as one of the animals had a sore on its back. It was Bazaar Day, the streets packed with people. We shouted and shouted, yet many did not get out of the way before they got a knock from the loads. Beyond the city 10 li we were once more into the desert for 70 li, till we reached the little oasis of Sai-ran. Here I was up against opposition, for before I had said anything about books, a man said "Nobody can read here," and with the policeman went away. However a few gathered round and I showed them some pictures, then the children gathered around me. Invariably I found that children with light blue eyes were less afraid of me than the children with different coloured eyes. In the evening I had another attack of ague for 3 hours.

Over Another Desert: Call On a Missionary.

March 30. A very long day; 220 li. We made an early start, and got to Kizil 40 li quite early, rested till the evening with the intention of staying at the Langar at Tograkdung. On the way, some women travellers were having a high time of it; one was about 50 and the other about 30. They raced each other along the road. The elder woman challenged a man to run. These Chanteo women are strong and well-built, and walk the stage as easy as the men. In the afternoon soon after we started we overtook a women and a little girl of 11 or 12, the girl riding on a donkey, they were going to Kuchae the whole 70 miles in one stage, having started at Kizil from Sai-ran where we started in the morning. We left at 7 p.m., about midnight were held up by a barrier in the middle of a pass. It is a lekin barrier. Soldiers came out to examine the luggage. My servant could not understand what the headman said so I called out that I was a foreigner. "Oh, that is alright, we will not examine your boxes," took down the barrier and let us through. I thanked him for his courtesy. When we reached the Langar at Tograkdung all was locked up so we had to go another 70 li to Kuchae. The whole route was desert till within 20 li of the

city. We had companions, but we went slowly on account of the sore on my poor animal's back. By going slowly, and washing the wound every day, anointing it with salve, it gradually got better. In travelling these long distances it is almost impossible to get over the journey without the animals getting a sore, especially the pack animals. If the R.S.P.C.A. inspectors were here, there would hardly be an animal permitted to go on a journey, that is the pack animals. The sufferings of these poor creatures is unspeakable. We arrived at the city of Kuchae at 8.30 a.m. How glad I was to get to the inn, having had an attack of ague 2 nights before, my poor back was like to break in two with the long ride of 70 miles. After a cup of tea I lay down and slept till noon. In the afternoon I paid a visit to Miss Engvall's home. She is the only missionary in the city. Tihua is her nearest Mission Station 20 days' journey. On my backward journey I called at the Post Office for letters, then I lost myself, having taken the wrong turn, finally a boy led me to the inn. That evening the post-master got a letter from his home, saying that his mother was dead, had 2 days' mourning, so was delayed, for I wished to draw money. Three days running I had lunch with Miss Engvall and heard about her work. Kuchae is a large city, and very busy. The best furs come from this neighbourhood. A road running parallel with the Khotan River to the Tarim or Yarkand River from Khotan then after crossing the river goes north to Kuchae. Along this route, though it is all desert there is a great deal of traffic. The journey takes 25 days, instead of 33, via Marsal-bashi and Yarkand and 41 days via Kashgar. As a rule the merchandise changes hands at Kuchae for the East. The magistrate very kindly prepared a feast for me, and there I met a small official from my old station of Sining in Kansuh. This magistrate is a very quiet thoughtful man and exceptionally courteous. Here my man gave me a lot of trouble. The second morning he wanted to go off very early. I said he could go after his work was done, and the animals attended to; he wanted to leave the work to the escort, but I would not agree. The next morning after I had my cup of tea he said he was going

out, that the escort would look after me, I objected, but he took no heed and off he went. I could have got another man, but he might be no better. However during his absence I had an opportunity of examining his luggage, and found as I had rather expected, about 24 knives, which he bought in Kashgar to sell in Tihua. I told him that he could not take them, as we allowed none of our servants to carry dutiable goods, so he told me that he had arranged with another man going to Tihua to take them. He had told me a big lie. Now, however, he had to give me proof that he was not taking them. He arranged with the carter to take them and brought the receipt he had got from the carter, and ere we started I examined his luggage. A Chanteo who saw how he acted said, "That fellow is not a man, he is a dog."

Slight Earthquake.

April 4th.—We left Kuchae at 1 p.m. Just outside the suburb there is a long street of empty houses, all the same size. The official who built them hoped to get the the people to live in them, in fact he forced some to occupy them, but gradually they went away. It could well be called Folly Street. My horse was not very well so only went 60 li, the following day 50 li, and the third day also 50. There was a slight earthquake, in the evening. Horse is well again. The 4th day we reached the city of Bugur, some 12,000 families in the oasis. Except for the little oasis at the end of each day's stage the rest was all desert. The Indian Aksakal wanted me to stay in his house, but as we were leaving early the next morning we preferred to stay in the inn. He is a very rich man. He was never tired of telling me how rich he was, how much land he had got by lending out money at a large interest, the poor farmer not being able to pay, his land was forfeited. The Aksakal's wives are Chanteo women, and their children an addition to the many different types of Chanteos to be seen in this vast Province of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan). Going to the home of the Aksakal I saw a body of a Chanteo women wrapped in calico according to the custom of the Mahommedans. A lot of children were playing near at hand and several men

sitting at a distance. On enquiry, I found she was the wife of a Chinese merchant and the Mullahs had refused permission for her to be buried in their cemetery. Money had been offered but refused, she had married a kafir (an unbeliever). Probably the result would be that they would bury her in waste land. She left 5 children. Bugur to Karashar was covered in 6 days, generally done in 5 days, but we preferred to take it easy; desert and jungle with pretty little spaces, or oases, here and there. The second day out we skirted the edge of the Takla-Makan desert, and there was many sand dunes. On the same day we passed the pretty little oasis of Chidur. The wheat was just beginning to shoot up, a lovely sheet of green fields hedged in by the tall golden reeds, with an avenue of cypress trees running through the village, and white poplars bordering the fields, all richly coloured by the sprouting buds, apricot, peach and pear trees in full bloom. The road runs parallel with the mountains. We crossed the river at Karashar in a ferry. My servant wanted to cross on horseback with the escort rather than be troubled to go about 8 li round, but I refused, and was glad I did so when I saw how deep it was when the escort crossed. Back again to Karashar.

The Great Takla-Maklan Desert Circumambulated.

Very few white men, if any, have had the privilege of travelling round this great desert in one journey. Straight across from east to west it is 500 miles in length; north to south, average width 150 miles, 90 stages, round it.

Karashar-Urumtsi (Tihua) 11 stages.—The first 2 days through territory belonging to the Mongol Prince of Karashar. A good deal of land under cultivation belonging to him. Passed many Mongol tents, the second day. Much marshy ground. One place the bridge was broken down. A Mongol who was on before having got safely over the bog, very kindly waited till we arrived, and showed us where to cross. It was very kind of him. I gave him a Gospel. Sand flies were very troublesome, making my horse very restless. By day, sand flies; by

night, mosquitoes. We passed a woman lying on the ground and her friends standing round her; she had taken ill suddenly and this far away, away from any dwelling. Such are the dangers in travelling in desert land. These deserts could tell many a sad story. Third stage was a very dreary one, reckoned by the people 60 miles but probably 49 miles. On the second evening we started out at 9.30 p.m. and arrived at Kara-Kizil at 7 a.m. This is the inn I missed on my outward journey. It stands in a gully with high rocks on both sides. Going from the south side it could not be missed as the inn door faces south, but coming from the north it is easy to miss, that is if you do not look back, for there is nothing to see but a huge pile of rubble stones on the north and east and looks like so many of the broken-down houses in the gully. That is how I missed it. If the men had not deceived me the night before, meeting the 4 Chanteos on the road after I had gone over 10 li, I would have asked them. If I had looked back down the gully, I would have seen the inn door, but I did not look back. There is not another house near, and I expected to see more houses than one. Kara-Kizil to Kumus very barren; the next day we crossed the mountain to Arghai Bulak, 100 li, and the following day arrived at Dokshun, where the road branches off to Turfan. Some days previous to our arrival at Dokshun there had been some very bad sand-storms which had blocked the roads very badly, making it hard for the carters. We saw one with his 3 horses struggling to get forward. The poor animals would make a desperate effort, get about 3 yards then stop again. The sufferings of the poor animals are terrible. About 12 li from Dokshun we saw the water coming out of a kariz. There are a few houses hard by, the owners having fields watered by this kariz. A few small trees grew by the side of the water. We saw the grass popping its head above the sand. In Dokshun district I was told there are 120 kariz, or underground tunnels with a grade less than the sloping plains, and thus lying farther and farther below the surface as they are followed up from the mouth. "The Pulse of Asia" by Ellsworth Huntington. "The system of the kariz was introduced"

into Chinese Turkestan from Persia about 1780 A.D." Soon after we left Dookshun a terrific north-eastern wind blew up, making it very difficult to proceed, and the following morning entering the pass, my animal was blown right round, and nearly threw me off. Once over the Tien-shan it was calmer. 2 days more brought me to Urumtsi (Tihua). I sent off a telegram from Dookshun on the Monday afternoon and it arrived at the Mission on Friday, 2 hours before me, just to give Messrs Hunter and Mather sufficient time to meet me about 7 li from the city. I had been away 6 months and 2 days, distance, 3,300 miles, 102 stages. I rode my mare all the way and she served me well. The officials were exceedingly kind to me all the way. The Postal Commissioner in Tihua very kindly made arrangements for me to draw any money needed by the way. The Postmasters did all they could for me. Except two attacks of ague I had good health all the way. The Scriptures were distributed among the people, and the result is left with the Lord of the Harvest.

The journey cost £50, and I passed through 18 cities, without a mission station.

I started on the promise "As thy Days, so shall thy Strength be." Now at the end I can truly say that the help and strength rendered has more than weighed down the balance on which the promise was laid.

[THE END].

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